

Idaho Master Naturalist Program

Starting a Chapter

Revised 2014



Table of Contents

Starting a Chapter...At a Glance.....	3
Phase I: Initial Steps.....	4
Phase II: Planning	6
Phase III: Education.....	10
Phase IV: Post Education Procedures.....	11
Appendix I: Local Coordinating Committee Job Description.....	12
Appendix II: Chapter Advisor Guidelines.....	14
Appendix III Chapter Organization Options.....	16
Appendix IV Program Requirements-Hours	18
Appendix V Curriculum Requirements	19
Appendix VI The Education Schedule	20
Appendix VII Education Fees and Expenses	21
Appendix VIII Presenters	22
Appendix IX Evaluation	22

Process for Establishing an IMNP Chapter

At a Glance

Initial Steps-Phase I

- ☐ 1. Explore the idea of an IMNP Chapter in your community.
- ☐ 2. Form a Local Coordinating Committee.
- ☐ 3. Meet with State Coordinator.

Planning-Phase II

- ☐ 1. Assemble syllabus.
- 2. Advertise chapter and enroll participants
- 3. Order materials

Education Phase III

- 1. Send participant roster to state coordinator
- ☐ 2. Provide Education sessions to participants.
- 3. Pay state program and material invoices.
- 4. Additional tasks.

Post Education Procedures IV

- ☐ 1. Organize Leadership Team-optional
- 2. Evaluate Program
- ☐ 3. Conduct Chapter Business
- 4. Advertise and provide volunteer opportunities

Initial Steps- Phase I

Time frame: These steps should be complete *at least 8 weeks* prior to the first education session.

1. **Explore the idea of an IMNP Chapter in your community.** As the Idaho Master Naturalist program grows, new chapters will be added each year in new communities. The locations for these chapters depend on several factors:
 - a. a demonstrated need for volunteers in the community to conduct service related to conservation and management of natural resources,
 - b. interest from community members in participating in the program,
 - c. willingness of some community members to serve on a Local Coordinating Committee to do the groundwork to build the chapter, and
 - d. interest from potential partner organizations in supporting the chapter in the community.Completing the first phase of the chapter development process demonstrates that these needs and interests exist in the community.
2. **Form Local Coordinating Committee.** For this first phase of the process, you will need to assemble a *Local Coordinating Committee*. Coordinating Committees can take several forms. One person (either a volunteer or an agency/organization employee) can start a chapter. This is the most difficult situation, but has successfully been done. The committee can also be a group of representatives from multiple agencies/organizations. This scenario helps distribute the work of getting the chapter started. A third model is agency representatives and future volunteers working together to start the chapter. Any work of a volunteer can count toward their first year's certification.

The task of this initial local coordinating committee is to guide the chapter through its beginning stages. The responsibilities include identifying a chapter advisor (see next section), identifying and talking with potential local partners, setting the ground rules and schedules for the chapter, recruiting participants, planning and organizing the first volunteer education course, planning and organizing service opportunities for the first volunteers, and keeping the initial records of participation and activities. This is a significant list of responsibilities, and coordinating committee members should be enthusiastic about the program and have the time and energy to make it happen. A complete job description for the Chapter Coordinating Committee is included in Appendix I. The State Advisory and the Program Coordinator will provide assistance to help you succeed.

The local coordinating committee should at least have a chapter advisor from a local natural resource agency. This advisor does not need to take the lead, but needs to commit to help the committee start the chapter. The advisor should be a local representative of a natural resource agency or organization, such as but not limited to Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Parks and Recreation, US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, BLM, Idaho Department of Lands, or University of Idaho Extension. The advisor's role is described in Appendix II.

3. **Schedule Meeting with State Coordinator-**The Local Coordinating Committee will meet in person or via phone with the state coordinator to discuss the following questions. It is important to not make these decisions until during or after the meeting with the state coordinator. The state coordinator will not be a part making the decisions, but is there to help the Coordinating Committee understand their options.

After the meeting, the Committee needs to submit answers to the questions discussed in the meeting to the state coordinator.

- a. What is our (Local Coordinating Committee) end goal? What do we want the volunteers to do?
- b. How will our chapter be organized? See options for organization in Appendix III.
- c. What is the SCOPE of the volunteer work that will be promoted (volunteers can do anything vs. volunteers must do project X only, or anything in between)?
- d. Who are our main partners?

e. What is our Duty Station?

The Local Coordinating Committee and Chapter Advisor also should identify the community in which the chapter will be based. This community may be a town, city, county, or other geographic area, such as a local watershed. The community will be the locality in which most education and meetings are held and will be the focal area for service projects. Identifying this locality does not prevent a chapter from accepting members from nearby localities or from assisting those members in finding service projects in their communities. Rather, this identification emphasizes the community-based nature of the program and communicates to interested citizens where the education and meetings are likely to be held.

The Local Coordinating Committee and Chapter Advisor also should identify the community in which the chapter will be based. This community may be a town, city, county, or other geographic area, such as a local watershed. The community will be the locality in which most education and meetings are held and will be the focal area for service projects. Identifying this locality does not prevent a chapter from accepting members from nearby localities or from assisting those members in finding service projects in their communities. Rather, this identification emphasizes the community-based nature of the program and communicates to interested citizens where the education and meetings are likely to be held.

- f. What subjects will we cover in the education sessions and how will we cover them? See Appendix V for a list of chapter and requirements.
- g. What track will this chapter present? See Appendix VI for track choices and requirements.
- h. What will the chapter name be?

The Local Coordinating Committee and Chapter Advisor can choose a name for the chapter. Ideally, the name should be locally relevant and have the potential to be long-lasting. The name may be geographical, natural history-based, or descriptive of the community in which the chapter is based. The name should continue to be appropriate over time, regardless of whether new chapters form in nearby communities. Names that refer to expansive geographic regions that might include many chapters in the future might not be good choices.

- h. What time of year/week/day will we train? See Appendix VII for tips.
- i. Program cost? See appendix VIII for budget information.
- j. What is the max # participants we will allow?

- k. How will we choose participants if too many apply?
- l. Will we provide a scholarship?
- m. What will our absentee policy be?
- n. What will our refund policy be?

Planning - Phase 2

Time frame: These steps should be complete at least 6 weeks prior to the first education session.

1. Assemble the Syllabus

After all the decisions above have been made, create a syllabus for the education course. The syllabus will set the tone and expectations for the new chapter members. Although chapters will differ in their approach to the education, some consistency statewide will help ensure that all Idaho Master Naturalists have a basic set of skills and knowledge to bring to their volunteer service.

Make sure your syllabus includes

- a. At least 40 hours of Core Education
- b. 25% of education is in the field
- c. Speakers who are knowledgeable and dynamic
- d. At least 10 of the core education chapters are covered

If you are having difficulties locating an instructor for a particular topic, please let us know and we will help you contact someone in your area.

The syllabus should include:

- a. The meeting dates and times for the course,
- b. List the topics that will be covered each session and
- c. The instructors who will be teaching those topics. See Appendix IX for presenter information.
- d. Locations and topics for field trips.

We understand that this is a draft syllabus and that some things may change during the course.

2. Advertise Chapter and Enroll Participants-collect course fees

When you advertise your chapter, be sure to have the following displayed in your advertisement:

- a. Cost
- b. Timeframe classes will run (every Tuesday from January 15th to April 1, for example)
- c. Location
- d. Certification Requirements
- e. Absentee Policies
- f. Applications acceptance dates (we will take registrations from X date to X date)
- g. There are sample newspaper articles and press releases available for you to use. In addition, there are brochures, facts sheets, and posters.

Methods of advertisements include emailing to constituents, facebook, brochures, posters, press releases, and more. The State Coordinator can help you with all of these.

3. Order Materials

- a. Syllabus
- b. Binders
- c. Tabs
- d. Books
- e. Nametags

Education Phase III

Time frame: These steps will require varying time frames depending on how education is planned.

- 1. Send participant roster (and registration forms) to State Coordinator** – The State Coordinator will provide a format for submitting the roster. This format will also be a way for you to keep track of participant information, records.
- 2. Provide Education sessions to participants.** A minimum of 10 people must graduate from the education sessions for the chapter to receive official status. Near the end of the education sessions, the chapter can establish a Leadership Team to replace the role of the Local Coordinating Committee. The chapter advisor that served on the Local Coordinating Committee should remain an active participant.

- Identify volunteers to assist with hospitality for course (snacks, room set-up, etc.)
- Evaluate guest instructors and overall education course (evaluation form available from State)
- Send “thank yous” to guest instructors

4. Additional Tasks

- a. Decide how you will bank. Bank account. Non-profit. Agency/organization banking
 - b. Work with partner organizations to identify volunteer needs and develop project proposals.
 - c. Finalize course syllabus and details
 - d. Populate your webpage information through the State Coordinator
The Idaho Master Naturalist Website is located at <http://www.idahomasternaturalist.org>. When you initiate a chapter, the chapter will receive a page on this website. To populate this webpage, work with the State Coordinator.
- Notify wait-listed individuals as needed and establish final course roster
 - Begin preparing evaluation and assessment process and materials. Talk with State Coordinator on how to administer evaluations.
 - Send out confirmation letters to guest instructors
 - Set up communication system for course participants
 - Continue working with partner organizations to identify volunteer needs and develop project proposals
 - Prepare for graduation-certificates and pins

Post Education Procedures- Phase IV

Time frame: The step above should be complete no more than 2 weeks after the last education session.

1. Organize Leadership Team (optional)

Chapters can be organized in a variety of ways. The decision needs to be made by the members of the chapter.

At the very minimum, a chapter must be organized with a Chapter Advisor (usually the same person who served on the Local Coordinating Committee), a volunteer leader (or pair), and one other person.

A chapter can also form a more formal “board” structure with elected officers that serve specified terms, decision making criteria, and bylaws.

501 c3 organizations are allowed.

All organizational structures regardless of their level are bound by the rules of using the IMNP name and logo. These rules and regulations are in the IMNP Policy Manual. All organizational structures must continue to serve the mission of the IMNP.

Volunteers working on the Leadership Team may use some of their hours as volunteer time. When recording this time on timesheets, the name of your chapter is the organization you are volunteering for. There is a limit of 25 hours/year/Leadership Team member for this purpose.

5. Evaluate Program

6. Conduct Chapter Business

- Establish committees (if necessary)
- Establish by-laws (if necessary).
- Continue working with partner organizations to identify volunteer needs and develop project proposals
- Work with course participants to match them to approved service projects
- Establish and communicate plans for continued interaction with chapter members (regular chapter meetings, listserv or on-line group, etc.)

Appendix I: Local Coordinating Committee Job Description

Place of Work: Home and meeting locations in the community as determined by the Local Coordinating Committee.

Goal: The Local Coordinating Committee builds the chapter and guides it through its beginning stages to complete requirements for chartering. The committee plans and conducts the first basic volunteer education course for the chapter and works with partner organizations to develop volunteer service projects.

Qualifications: Local Coordinating Committee members should have enthusiasm about the Idaho Master Naturalist program and a strong desire to see the program succeed in their community. They should possess good organizational and communication skills. Some knowledge of natural resources and of potential partners and partner organizations in the community is helpful.

Duties: As a committee and with help from the Chapter Advisor, determine the chapter's name and the community in which it will be based. Plan the first education course by developing a syllabus and reading list, scheduling instructors, and determining logistics such as a location for the course. Develop an initial set of volunteer service projects by working with partner organizations in the community, such as parks, schools, non-profits, and state agencies. Develop and execute procedures for recruiting and communicating with chapter members. Keep the chapter's initial records on chapter members, education hours, and volunteer hours. Handle course fees and chapter funds using standard bookkeeping practices. These duties may be divided among the Local Coordinating Committee members. At least one person from the Local Coordinating Committee needs to attend an education session with the State Program Coordinator. The State Program Coordinator will provide resources such as sample syllabi, potential readings, and ideas for service projects.

Time Required: The Local Coordinating Committee's responsibilities begin when the committee is formed and end when the chapter has completed its first volunteer education course and organized a Leadership Team to continue the leadership of the chapter. This process generally lasts 9 to 15 months. After that time, some Local Coordinating Committee members may choose to run for and participate in the chapter's Leadership Team.

Benefits: The Local Coordinating Committee leads the effort to establish the Idaho Master Naturalist program in a new community and has the opportunity to set the tone and direction of that chapter. Committee members develop leadership, management, and communication skills. They network with staff of state agencies and partner organizations involved in the conservation and management of natural resources in the community. When a chapter has more qualified applicants for an education course than available spaces, Local Coordinating Committee members receive high priority for that education session, as they are deeply involved in growing the chapter. Local Coordinating Committee members who wish to become Master Naturalist may use their chapter formation work as their required volunteer service hours the first year.

Supporting Resources: The Chapter Advisor will assist the Local Coordinating Committee in its tasks and decision making. The state Steering Committee will provide in-depth education on the program and how to coordinate a chapter for two committee members, who can then share what they have learned with the rest of the committee. Written resources, including the Idaho Master Naturalist Program Volunteer Policy Handbook is available.

Impact and Reporting Procedures: The Local Coordinating Committee is responsible for **regularly communicating** with the State Program Coordinator to ensure the chapter development process is going smoothly and according to program and agency policies. The committee must meet several important deadlines over the course of the chapter's development. These include (1) Meeting with the State Coordinator (2) Submitting decisions about the chapter outlined on page 5. (3) Submitting registration forms and roster.

Advisor/Supervisor: The Chapter Advisor advises the Local Coordinating Committee. The Program Coordinator and Steering Committee provide additional support and supervision.

Appendix II: Chapter Advisor Guidelines

The Advisor's role is as follows:

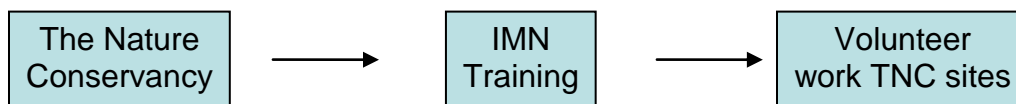
1. Attend initial Local Chapter Coordinators' training along with other designated members of Local Coordinating Committee.
2. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
3. The advisor should not be the manager of the chapter business or activities. However, as a member of the chapter's Leadership Team the advisor is expected to attend all scheduled Leadership Team meetings and provide counsel and advice when needed. He or she is to be a chapter supporter and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the chapter and/or its members on and of appropriate and professional matters.
4. Be familiar with the goals, activities and mission of the organization and local Chapter.
5. Be willing to meet with the officers of the organization to discuss expectations of their roles and responsibilities.
6. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the chapter as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the chapter's Leadership Team that are within the parameters of the statewide Idaho Master Naturalist program.
7. Facilitate opportunities for Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, advisors should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.
8. Be aware of the chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures.
9. Be aware of the Idaho Master Naturalist State policies and guidelines and other agency or organization guidelines that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its officers know where these policies and guidelines are published, what rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. You are expected to report violations or potential violations to the State Program Coordinator.
10. The advisor should be ready to assist the Master Naturalist State Program and State Steering Committee as needed as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.
11. The advisor is responsible for notifying the chapter officers and the State Steering Committee regarding chapter concerns. The chapter officers are responsible for notifying the State Program Coordinator regarding advisor problems or concerns.

The Chapter-Advisor(s) relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapter and its leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for advisor interaction and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

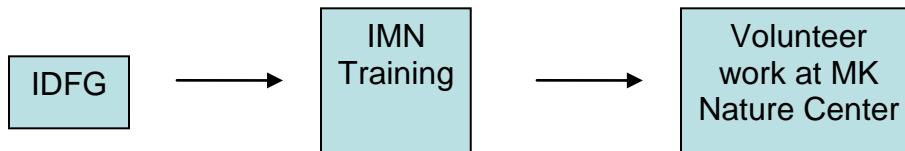
Appendix III- Chapter Organization Options

IMNP developers fully recognize individual styles of teaching and program implementation. By no means, are these suggestions, or any part of the program design meant to restrict you from starting a chapter using your own creativity. Chapters can be formed in several ways.

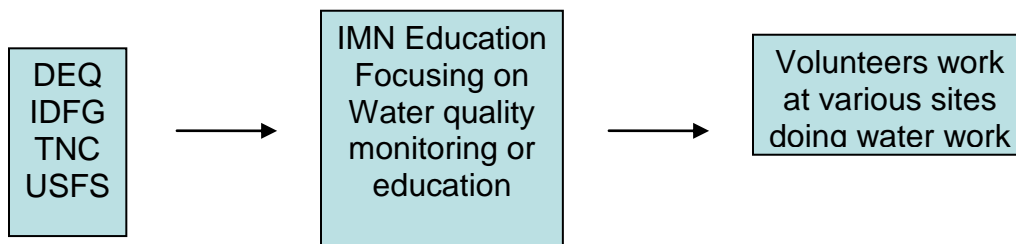
1. A chapter may be formed around an agency. In this scenario, one agency or organization may start a chapter by themselves, with few or no partners. Participants will sign up for the program knowing their volunteer time is expected to be for the agency putting on the education sessions. An example of this might be The Nature Conservancy starting a chapter to help them with all aspects of their work on their properties.



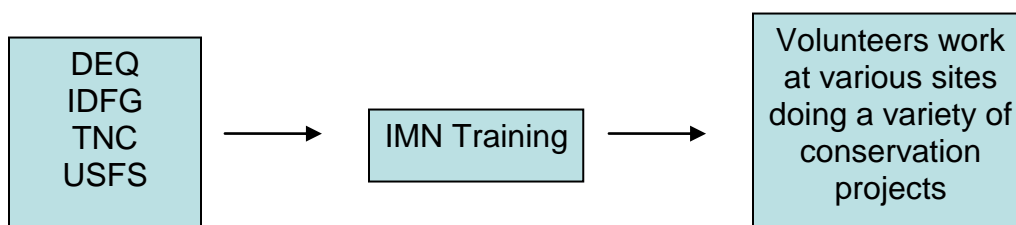
2. **A chapter may be formed around a location.** There might be a specific location that a Master Naturalist group is trained to work on. For example, Idaho Rivers United might start a Master Naturalist Chapter for work on projects on the Boise River. Participants may engage in a variety of activities and for various agencies that work on the Boise River. Participants would know, entering the program, their volunteer time was expected to be focused on the River.



3. **A chapter may be formed around a cause, or subject matter.** One example is water quality. An Idaho Master Naturalist chapter could be opened to focus on water and water quality monitoring and education. Many agencies might come together to rally around this conservation cause. Many agencies would benefit from the Idaho Master Naturalist Participants. Volunteers would know, entering the program, their volunteer work would be focused around water quality work and could be performed at a variety of locations.



4. **A chapter may be formed for general purposes.** An agency, organization, or a group of agencies could get together to form a chapter with the purpose of contributing to the education of the volunteers and providing volunteer projects. Volunteers would know, entering the program, they could choose where they served their volunteer time.



There may be other scenarios that the IMNP can be implemented to serve. All IMNP chapters do not need to look alike. Regional variations due to a different array of partnering agencies are welcomed and will only add to the strength of the program. As long as the mission and general format remain consistent, we can build a network of chapters around the state working toward conservation.

Appendix IV-Program Requirements-Hours

The *minimum* volunteer education course requirements include 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences, with at least 25% of that time spent in the field. Education must cover at least 10 of the 20 chapters provided in the core curriculum. Because of its geographical diversity, the natural resources of Idaho vary widely. Therefore, each local chapter will customize their education program to focus on their local ecosystems. Over the 40 hours of education, the course should include education to achieve the core education objectives for what Idaho Master Naturalist should know and be able to do. The Chapter Coordinating Committee may require more than 40 hours of education for certification, but no more than 50 hours.

Track curriculum can be delivered as part of the 40 hours of required education OR as advanced education OR as a combination of both. For example:

An Idaho Master Naturalist should know...

- All aspects of their role as an Idaho Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the program, and the guidelines for participation

An Idaho Master Naturalist should be able to...

- Use a key to identify organisms
- Use a field guide
- Share knowledge with others (verbally and/or in writing)
- Make and record observations in nature
- Recognize when he or she does not know the answer to a question, but be able to seek out answers from people, books, or other reliable resources

Appendix V- Curriculum Requirements

CORE Education CURRICULUM

The core curriculum consists of 20 chapters of material. It may not be possible for all 20 chapters to be covered in each chapter education session. It is up to chapter planning teams what chapters to cover and how many, though at least 10 chapters are required to be covered. The chapters have been written for the Master Naturalist to read before a field trip or class session that might expand on the concepts in each chapter. Chapter leaders may choose their own activities to teach concepts or explore ideas. To promote regional variation in the program, specific lesson plans have not been provided. However, chapter planning committees are encouraged to share lesson plans and education ideas and will be able to do so, on the Idaho Master Naturalist website.

Each participant must have a complete copy of the curriculum, either printed or electronic. The curriculum will be provided to you at cost by IDFG.

Written Chapters in the Idaho Master Naturalist Curriculum include:

Introduction to the Idaho Master Naturalist Program

Nature Journaling

American Naturalists

Ecological Concepts

Ecological Regions of Idaho

Land Use and Ownership

Aquatic Ecology

Ichthyology and Fisheries Management

Forest Ecology and Management

Geology of Idaho

Idaho Ornithology

Mammals

Nature of Naming

Reptiles and amphibians of Idaho

Plants

Effects of Urbanization on Natural Systems

Wetlands

Range Ecology and Management

Ethics and Natural Resource Decision Making (not yet available)

APPENDIX VI-The Education Schedule

Chapter Coordinating Committee sets its own education schedules. As the education classes are put together, remember that the time of day chosen to hold class sessions significantly influences the make up of the class. If

education is offered during the **daytime**, individuals with flexible schedules (which may include self-employed, homemakers, retirees, and some individuals with disabilities), will be able to take the education, but this schedule will possibly exclude those who work full time or part-time. This schedule may also affect the speakers available to teach classes. Education in the **evening** may widen the participant group, but could open the education to individuals who cannot complete the volunteer service requirements or become active Idaho Master Naturalists. If all or most of the service opportunities require **week day** participation, make certain during screening that all individuals will be able to fulfill their certification requirements. If education is offered at night to accommodate trainees that are not available during the day, then there must be appropriate volunteer service opportunities available in the evening and **weekend** hours. Otherwise, offering education in the evening and having all volunteer opportunities during the day substantially lowers retention rates due to the individual's inability to volunteer during the times available.

Deciding when during the year to conduct the class also requires careful consideration. Spring, fall, and summer all offer more opportunities for outdoor field trips, although winter is often a less busy time for guest presenters. The decision of when to offer the education should also reflect the timing of the need for volunteer service.

APPENDIX VII-Education Fees and Expenses

Educating volunteers to become IMNs is not without its costs; expenses, however, can be minimized and managed. Basic costs for each participant include:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Core Curriculum- (ordered and printed by State) | \$15.00 |
| 2. Core Curriculum-(on CD) | \$3.00 |
| 3. Binder-for curriculum | \$5.00 |
| 4. Graduation Fees-owed to State at graduation time | \$5.00/person |
| 5. Fee to State Program*-owed to State at beginning of education sessions | \$10.00/person |
| 6. Binder tabs-for curriculum | \$6.00 |

Additional costs for a chapter may include:

Mailing charges, speaker thank you notes, refreshments, nametags, scholarships, room rental fees, speaker fees or traveling costs.

APPENDIX VIII -Presenters

Guest presenters should be experts in one or more aspects of the Master Naturalist curriculum as well as *excellent educators* who can engage the trainees in the material at hand. They should have strong knowledge of the local natural resources in your chapter's community. Local staff from the program's sponsoring agency and local partners are often willing to be instructors. The community is a great source for additional instructors with natural resource knowledge and experience. City and county professionals, local high school and college faculty, nature center staff, and others can be ideal presenters. Please try to use presenters from as local an area to your chapter as possible. If you have speakers traveling from long distances, consider collaborating with a nearby chapter to offer the education jointly. This saves the chapter's time, resources, and effort; saves speakers from making the same presentation numerous times; and also allows for collaboration among Master Naturalist chapters.

Prepare a tentative schedule of presentations and presenters, then contact each speaker to see if he or she is willing and able to present on the particular topic and date. Once the speakers have agreed to dates and topics, confirmation packages should be sent to the presenters. Each presenter should receive a letter that thanks him/her for agreeing to present and restates the dates, times, topics, and objectives for the presentation. Directions to the education facility and a map should also be included with the letter. It is helpful to include a list of any related readings or reference materials that the trainees will have read ahead of time. Instructors also can be asked to provide ahead of time quiz questions (optional) based on the material they will present. These questions assist in evaluating whether or not the trainees understood the lecture topic and if the topic was presented well. Instructors should also be asked what AV equipment they need, and it should be clear who is responsible for providing the equipment.

A follow-up note, phone call, or e-mail one week before the presentation reminds the instructor of the class and avoids potential confusion. Thank-you letters sent after the presentation are also greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX IX- Evaluation

Program evaluation is meant to help determine if the program is successful in meeting the identified goals and objectives. Program evaluation is essential for accountability and determining how we can make the program better.

The Idaho Master Naturalist Program has been designed with an evaluation component that is not separate from the education or service components. It is required that all education classes perform the evaluation as part of program implementation. Participants are not required to participate in the evaluation process. You may add additional evaluation components to your particular chapter program. The evaluation tools provided are mandatory but can be tailored to fit your program. Your participation in writing custom questions for your region and chapter is essential, if you want specific information gathered regarding unique program components you added.

The evaluation of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program, in general terms, seeks to answer the question, "Is the Idaho Master Naturalist Program successful in meeting its goals, objectives, and participant learning outcomes?" And, "How can the program change to be more effective and satisfying to future participants?"

The program evaluation can be administered several ways. Please contact the State Program Coordinator for options.

